United Nations CEDAW/C/ISL/Q/7-8

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.: General
8 August 2015

Original: English

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
Sixty-third session
15 February-4 March 2016
Item 4 of the provisional agenda*
Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

List of issues and questions in relation to the combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of Iceland

Legislative and institutional framework

1. In its previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/ICE/CO/6, para. 14), the Committee recommended that the State party should increase its efforts to raise awareness of the provisions of the Convention, its Optional Protocol, the Committee's jurisprudence under the Optional Protocol and general recommendations among judges, prosecutors, lawyers and other legal professionals. Please provide information on any awareness-raising measures in this regard and provide examples of cases in which the Convention has been invoked before the courts.

2. It is indicated in the report (CEDAW/C/ISL/7-8) that article 2 of Act No. 62/2014 amending Gender Equality Act No. 10/2008 introduced a new definition of direct and indirect discrimination based on sex or gender. Please indicate whether article 2 has since been invoked before the courts and provide examples of cases, if any. Please provide information on any measures or regulations under the revised Gender Equality Act that establish an equal pay standard. Please also provide updated information on the two cases mentioned in the report (see p. 4)[1] that have been pending before the Gender Equality Complaints Committee since April 2014.

3. According to information before the Committee, the budget and staff of the Centre for Gender Equality were cut, although its mandate was expanded in 2008.

Note: The present document is being circulated in English, French and Spanish only.

* CEDAW/C/63/1.

[1] Unless otherwise indicated, page numbers refer to the combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of the State party (CEDAW/C/ISL/7-8).

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Please indicate whether any measures have been taken by the State party to mitigate the impact of the budgetary and staffing cuts on the efficiency and effectiveness of the Centre and to make its services more accessible to rights holders, including women, given its remote location outside the capital.

4. Please provide information on the impact of and lessons learned from the implementation of the 2011-2014 Action Plan on Gender Equality. Please indicate the impact of the gender-responsive budgeting policy introduced by the State party to mitigate the impact of austerity measures on women and whether that approach has been replicated in the new four-year action plan on gender equality. Please also provide information on the mechanisms and measures adopted to ensure equal participation by women in the entire process of the development and adoption of the post-2015 development agenda.

5. The report is silent regarding the previous recommendation of the Committee to consider establishing an independent national human rights institution with a broad mandate to promote and protect human rights, including women's rights. Please indicate the steps taken by the State party towards establishing such a national human rights institution, in line with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles).

Violence against women

6. In its previous concluding observations, the Committee expressed concern about the light penalties for sexual violence, the lack of updated detailed information and the disparity between the number of investigated cases of sexual offences and the number of prosecutions and convictions. In that light, please indicate whether the State party has reviewed its Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code to ensure that perpetrators of violence against women are adequately prosecuted and punished in accordance with the gravity of their acts. Please also provide updated information on the number of cases of rape reported per year, the number of prosecutions, and the sentences imposed on perpetrators, disaggregated by age and relationship between victim and perpetrator. Please explain the rising level of acquittals and the decrease in convictions for sex offences between 2007 and 2011.

7. Reportedly, the introduction of the system of protection orders in 2011 did not prove to be effective, owing in part to the short duration of such orders (48 hours). Please provide information on the measures taken to increase the effectiveness of protection orders, including by extending their duration. It is also indicated that, by 2013, no protection order had been issued. Please provide updated information on any protection order issued and whether the consent of the victim is required in order to issue a protection order. Please also indicate whether the State party is taking steps to specifically criminalize domestic violence.

8. Please provide information on the measures taken to open more emergency shelters and strengthen support services for women who are victims of violence, including migrant women, such as 24-hour hotlines, rape crisis clinics and psychological counselling. Please also explain whether the State party intends to reconsider its decision to dismantle the sex crime unit of the police in 2010 owing to funding cuts and to absorb it into a unit dealing with common crimes such as murder and serious bodily harm.

9. Reportedly, women with disabilities and migrant women are more exposed to violence than other women. Is there any systematic research on how gender and other grounds of discrimination interact in relation to being at risk of violence, including sexual violence? Please provide information on efforts to disseminate information on the rights of immigrant women and to facilitate access to existing legal mechanisms and government services.

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

10. Please provide updated information on the implementation of the measures under the 2013-2016 National Action Plan against Trafficking in Human Beings, in particular the impact on women or girls, and on their results. Please also provide information on the number of reported cases of trafficking in women and exploitation of prostitution and of investigations, prosecutions and convictions and on the penalties imposed on the clients and pimps. Please provide an impact assessment of the amendments to the Penal Code in 2009 that made the purchasing of sexual services illegal, including data on the number of clients prosecuted.

11. In the follow-up report, it is mentioned that there are no special legal provisions on the protection of victims of or witnesses to human trafficking. Please provide information on the assessment undertaken by the Ministry of the Interior in this regard and indicate the measures taken or envisaged to address the problem. Please also provide information on measures taken to strengthen cooperation between the police and social and health-care authorities in the field of human trafficking.

12. Please provide updated information on the proposal made in Parliament in late 2013 on the revision of rules regarding the granting of operating licences for restaurants in order to prevent so-called champagne clubs. Please also indicate the measures taken to identify and regulate new platforms of prostitution, such as Internet dating sites, local bars and restaurants. What steps have been taken to provide alternative income opportunities for women who wish to leave prostitution?

Participation in public life and economic decision-making

13. Considering the low representation of women in the national police force, please indicate whether the State party plans to adopt measures, including temporary special measures, in line with article 4 of the Convention and general recommendation No. 25 on temporary special measures, to promote the representation of women, including women belonging to ethnic minorities and women with disabilities, in Parliament, local governments, the judiciary, the police and the foreign service, in particular at decision-making levels.

Education

14. In the report, it is indicated that boys and girls still make gender-segregated choices regarding education and training. Please provide information on any measures taken to eliminate gender-stereotyped vocational and educational orientation of boys and girls. Please explain whether the State party is considering introducing education on human rights, including on gender equality, and age-appropriate education on sexuality, responsible sexual behaviour and reproductive health and rights in school curricula. Please provide information on access by

migrant girls to primary and secondary school education, the number of students enrolled, attendance, dropouts and the success rate.

Employment

15. In the report, it is stated that there is a persistent gender wage gap in the State party. Please indicate whether the State party is considering imposing any sanctions on employers for breaches of the principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value. Please provide updated information on the implementation of the Equal Pay Standard and the Plan of Action on Gender Equality Regarding Wages and measures taken to reduce the wage gap. Please also explain why the minimum number of employees required to implement the 40 per cent gender quota is set somewhat high, at 50 employees, given the Icelandic context.

16. Please provide information on the family policy for the period up to 2020 and explain how it will promote a balance between working life and family life and equal sharing of responsibilities by both parents in relation to housework and child care. Please indicate whether any consideration has been given to synchronizing parents' holidays and working hours with day care and school hours for children. Please indicate whether the extension of the total parental leave period from 9 to 12 months has been introduced.

17. Reportedly, women account for 91 per cent of all single parents and 77 per cent of those single parents suffer severe economic difficulties. Please indicate the measures taken by the State party to mitigate the reported deterioration of the financial situation of single women and single mothers.

Health

18. In the light of the relatively high number of pregnancies and abortions among girls under 18 years of age, please provide information on any measures taken to reduce early pregnancies and abortions. Please indicate what measures the State party is implementing to ensure that there is broad access, including by migrant women, to sex education, family planning information and services, contraceptives and programmes for reintegration into education after giving birth and provide information on trends over time.

Disadvantaged groups of women

19. Please provide information on specific measures taken by the State party to ensure gender equality for women who experience intersectional discrimination based on any factor in all areas covered under the Convention. Please provide information on access by immigrant women and women with disabilities to all the rights enshrined in the Convention. Please indicate whether the State party is considering ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol thereto.

20. Reportedly, 40 per cent of Icelandic residents with a foreign background feel discriminated against, in particular in the workplace. Please provide information on the specific situation of women with a foreign background and measures taken to allow women of foreign origin to participate fully in economic, social, public and political life.